

# REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis • Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Adoption Support Program



## Happy Spring REACH Families!

We hope you are enjoying the wonderful change in weather as Spring approaches! As the days lengthen and the sun begins to warm, it's a wonderful time to explore the outdoors. We hope you enjoy BBQ's, trips to the park and family fun in the Central Valley! In this edition of the REACH newsletter, we will continue to explore the "Seven Core Issues in Adoption". This newsletter will focus on loss and rejection as two of the core issues. We hope you enjoy our articles, activity idea and movie review.



**IMPORTANT CHANGE!** The Tulare County REACH Newsletter is going digital! Due to the increasing cost of printing and our desire to be green – we are working towards making our newsletter digital! If you receive this newsletter by mail, please contact us ASAP and provide us with your email address. If you do not have an email address and need to continue receiving a hard copy, we will do so on request.

Please email [jujones@aspiranet.org](mailto:jujones@aspiranet.org) to insure you do not miss a single newsletter! You may also call the office direct at 559-741-7358.

We appreciate your continued support!

*JulieAnn*

### Tulare County Spring 2019

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## NEED HELP? Is your adoptive child exhibiting any of the following behaviors?

- Frequent running away
- Sexualized behavior
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Aggressive/assaultive behavior
- Oppositional/defiant behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- One or more hospitalizations in a Mental Health facility
- Substance use disorder
- Fire starter
- Minor criminal behavior
- School behavior/truancy problems
- Beyond control of parents and or primary care adults
- Mild Developmental disorder not recognized by a Regional Center

if so, we can help! The REACH program can connect adoptive families to services that can help. Some of the services available to your family include Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) and Tulare County Wraparound. TBS is an intensive one-to-one behavioral mental health service. The service is available to parents/caregivers of children/youth who experience serious emotional challenges. Tulare County Wraparound provides high-risk youth and their families an alternative to group home care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy promoting the reestablishment of at risk youth and families into community support systems.



## One Adoptee's Experience

as told to Kathy A. Steele, LCSW

As mentioned in the previous Winter issue of the REACH newsletter, we will be discussing aspects of the seven core issues in adoption over the next few publications. As a reminder, Deborah Silverstein and Sharon Kaplan were responsible for developing this model with its focus on the adoption triad (Adoptee, Birth Parent & Adoptive Parent). In interviewing Tina, an adult adoptee, I borrowed from Silverstein and Kaplan's work beginning with a brief description of "loss." Loss is considered to be the "hub" of the seven core issues. And as noted by the authors, "adoption is created through loss, without loss there would be no adoption."

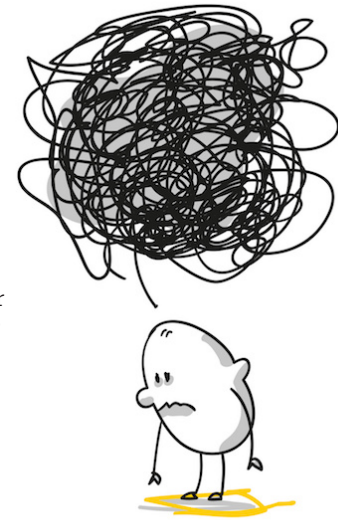
For a birth parent, the loss of a child to whom they are genetically connected has profound life long implications. For adoptive parents whether through infertility, failed pregnancy, still birth, or the death of a child, have suffered tremendous loss. In essence, they have lost their "dream child." Adoptees have multiple losses as well, beginning with the initial loss and separation from birth family. Any subsequent losses or perceived threats of separation, becomes more formidable for adoptees than their non-adopted peers. And so it began for Tina, an adult adoptee and who was placed as a toddler with her adoptive family.

Early on, Tina remembers being extremely anxious and fearful at the thought of being left alone. She always needed someone "within eye shot." That may have been her mom and dad, or her older brother and sister. Similar to Tina, her siblings were adopted though none were biologically related. In fact, Tina laughingly remembers looking at family photos in which there were absolutely no physical similarities. Regardless, they were "family" and though they lived modestly, Tina never felt she went without necessities or feeling loved. As a young girl, Tina developed affection for animals and was given a horse by her paternal grandfather who seldom denied her what she wanted. Tina said this didn't make her father very happy, but she now knows that grandparents tend to spoil their grandkids and Tina was no exception.

In terms of nurturance and affection, Tina remembers that her parents, particularly her mother, whom she described as being "goofy and passionate" were devoted to her every need. Tina recalls her mother as a woman who always stood up for her beliefs, even if it upset others. She also taught Tina and her siblings to be accepting of others regardless of race, culture or class differences, which Tina continues to value and practice to this day. Whether it was cooking meals, sewing her clothes or getting her ready for school, Tina knew she could depend on her mother. When her mother needed to work outside the home, the family hired a woman to help with childcare and cleaning. Cora, according to Tina, became another valued member of the family and a key figure in her life. So much so that Tina remembers walking hand and hand with Cora to school each day. Cora would also stand outside Tina's classroom window until Tina's anxiety lessened and she settled in at her desk.

Rather than visit friends away from home, Tina remembers wanting to entertain them at her house. In fact, aside from times in which she was out late playing school sports, she chose to be at home with her family. To this day, Tina states that this is her preference. When asked in what ways her family created a sense of "belongingness," Tina readily responded by saying "they saw us for who we were no exceptions." They also provided us with "unconditional love." Within this secure setting, Tina remembers developing individual interests and close ties within her family, particularly with her sister. When talking about her, Tina refers to her sister as being her "safety/spot person," which she further describes as being someone with whom she shares an incredibly close relationship and with whom she can confide or seek comfort or reassurance when needed. No doubt, their close sibling relationship provided much needed support when at the young age of 22 and pregnant with her first child, Tina lost her mother to cancer. Following this devastating loss, Tina remembers "her life fell apart, as well as her marriage." Tina remembers worrying about what would happen next. After all, her mother had always been the one to take care of everything and everyone, including Tina's father. Following her death, Tina was concerned about what would happen to her familiar childhood home and what it would feel like without her mom's presence. For several years, Tina remembers being angry at her mother for dying and lashing out at others. Knowing what she knows now about adoption and loss she wonders if the loss of her mother was similar to the one she experienced as a toddler when she was separated from her birth family. Being angry as a young child was something she also recalls. Subsequent losses in Tina's life, such as the loss of her paternal grandfather were also difficult, but her mother's death always stood out as being the most devastating.

According to Silverstein and Kaplan, "feelings of loss are exacerbated by keen feelings of rejection." "One way adoptees may seek to cope with a loss is to personalize it (i.e., what did I do that led to this loss?). Adoptees may even become sensitive to the slightest hint of rejection, causing them to avoid situations where they might be rejected in order to validate their earlier negative self-perceptions." Sadly, adoptees, even at young ages grasp the concept that to be "chosen" means first that one was "un-chosen," which reinforces adoptees' lowered self-concept. Tina understands how the issue of rejection has played a role in her life beginning when



she was a young school age girl. At all times, she tried to minimize being rejected by becoming “the best,” at whatever activity she was engaged in (i.e., softball, academic studies, etc). Her desire to minimize rejection carried over into her interpersonal relationships, including her first marriage, in which she would compromise more than she thought she should. In retrospect, Tina believes that her divorce from her first husband was the “ultimate rejection,” and she remembers thinking more than once “why was I not good enough.”

When asked if she found herself rejecting others before they could reject her, Tina shared an example from a more recent situation, which has yet to be resolved. In hopes of connecting with birth family, who could provide her with valuable genetic information, Tina submitted a DNA sample to a major biotechnology company a couple of years ago. Approximately one year ago, she was contacted by a biological relative who informed her that she knew Tina’s birth mother, but that the birth mother was unwilling to connect with Tina. She was told at that time that she was a “dark secret.” Once again, Tina “felt the sting of the rejection.” With the support of her family, as well as her deep faith, she eventually came to peace with her birth mother’s decision and “moved on.” Interestingly, a couple of days



prior to this interview, after several months of silence in which no contact occurred, Tina received a text from the same biological relative who informed her that the birth mother has had a change of heart and now wants to have contact. Tina openly expresses bewilderment at this change of events and though her initial reaction is to “reject” this invitation, she wants to give this idea careful thought. After all, Tina’s initial request for contact in an effort to acquire genetic information that would be helpful for herself as well as her children remains important to her (i.e., physical characteristics, mental and physical health and addiction issues, etc). Certainly with age, experience and the support of her family, as well counseling and education, Tina’s perspective from an adoptee’s vantage point has matured and no doubt she will make the best decision for herself. “Blood,” according to Tina does not make family and in making decisions, particularly this one, she has consulted with close members of her adoptive family, as well as with her husband, children, goddaughter and goddaughter’s husband. In the end, however, Tina feels firmly in control and confident in whatever decision she ultimately chooses to act upon.

## Helping Your Child Create a Grief Box

By: Natasha Burton, LCSW

Inherent in adoption are multiple losses for all members of the constellation. A grief box can help your child express and contain their loss by having a place for items that symbolize their losses. By creating a grief box, youth participate in a ritual that acknowledges their loss, and constructs a controlled vehicle for revisiting their losses in the future. A grief box should be created with your child, if your child has a therapist you may consider getting them involved as well. This is a great tool for your child to work through feelings, however, make sure you are emotionally prepared to take the journey with them.

1. Your child can use a shoebox and decorate it or let your child select a decorative box from any craft store. Make sure the box is large enough to hold several items. The box symbolizes the child’s life.
2. Have your child make a list of things that make them sad (loss of previous home, loss of caregiver, loss of culture, loss of birth siblings etc). Offer suggestions as to some items that they can place in their box such as pictures or other items that represent those losses.
3. Have your child share why they chose the particular items and how each item makes them feel (sad, angry, scared). Re-assure your child that it is okay to have those feelings. The box should be kept somewhere your child can easily add items and re-visit the contents. Credit: Macleod and Macra





## Movie Review: “Adopted”

By Carrie Ontiveros, MA

The movie *Adopted*, by director Barb Lee and co-producer Nancy Kim Parson, examines the experiences of two families and their adoption experiences. Both Ms. Lee and Ms. Kim Parsons are Korean adoptees and, in their words from their website [www.adoptedthemove.com](http://www.adoptedthemove.com), “they set out to create a documentary that revealed the complexities of transracial adoption without making judgments or telling the viewer what to think. Instead, they decided to explore the many layers of transracial adoption and they began by expanding their understanding beyond their personal experiences.”

*Adopted* follows two families, Paul and Judy Faro, who adopted their daughter, Jennifer Faro, from Korea over 30 years ago, and John and Jacqueline Trainer, who, during the course of the movie, are matched for adoption and adopt their daughter, Roma, from China. Jennifer shares her experiences as an adoptee, including her struggle with identity, and wants her parents to join her in exploring her history and experiences. Her parents, both struggling with health challenges, are reluctant to participate in her search. Jennifer acknowledges her parents were not provided with the education available to families adopting today but wants them to “do better.” Referring to her search for identity she says, “It’s not my journey, it’s our journey. This is not my burden.” However, she finds that her parents’ willingness to take that journey with her is not what she hopes it will be. Jennifer describes the desire behind her search as “I want my whole identity, my whole life. It is not rejection of the family; it’s being authentic and real.” To her parents, her story starts when they picked her up at the airport in Seattle. To Jennifer, her story began in Korea.

In contrast to Jennifer’s experiences as an adult adoptee, the Trainers are just beginning their adoption journey. We get to see the reasons behind their decision to adopt and their excitement to meet their daughter, Roma. Through what they share during the movie, it seems this couple, unlike the Faros, received some education related to adoption and they present an awareness of issues and challenges experienced by adoptees, such as loss (including feelings of loss by the birth mother) and identity. The Trainers also have a fairly diverse family and another family member who has adopted

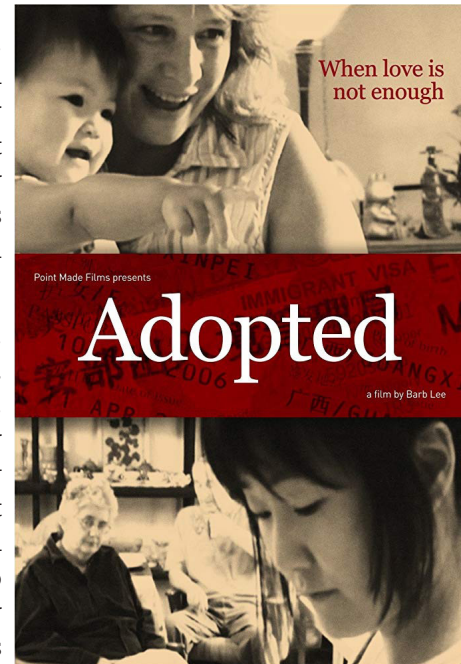


from China. Yet even with their knowledge and understanding, they still hold the belief that many of us have held about our love for child. While talking about challenges they may face, such as raising Roma in a city they describe as 90% white, the Trainers hope that their “love will be enough” for her to overcome those challenges. Jennifer Faro would disagree.

While *Adopted* presents the experiences of families who have adopted internationally, their experiences also relate to families who have adopted transracially as well as any adoptive family. The movie doesn’t give answers to the questions presented but sometimes we need to remind ourselves that it’s okay not to have all the answers. Every family is different and each adoptee’s experience and perspective will be different. Just knowing that there are questions, even

before they are being asked by your child, is the first step in finding out what the answers will be for you and your family.

*Adopted*, which runs just under one hour and 20 minutes, is available for download or purchase and can also be viewed on YouTube. There is also a companion DVD available called “We Can Do Better” which offers insight and advice from the adoption community.



# Support Groups & Events

## April

- 2 Tulare REACH Parents Corner  
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm  
Congregation B'nai David, Visalia, CA
- 9 Kings REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
South Valley Community Church, Lemoore

## May

- 7 Tulare REACH Parents Corner  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Congregation B'nai David, Visalia
- 14 Kings REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
South Valley Community Church, Lemoore
- 29 Attachment Training  
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
COS Hanford, **room pending**

## June

- 4 Tulare REACH Parents Corner  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Congregation B'nai David, Visalia
- 11 Kings REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
South Valley Community Church, Lemoore



### Tulare County REACH Parents Corner

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents as well as others touched by adoption. Training hours provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.** Infants are welcome to join parents/caregivers.

<b>Where:</b>	<b>When:</b>
Congregation B'nai David, Education Building 1039 S. Chinowth Street Visalia, CA 93277	1st Tuesday of the month 6:30 – 8:30 PM April 2nd May 7th June 4th

**Contact:** JulieAnn Jones at (559) 741-7358 ext. 4506  
or [jujones@aspiranet.org](mailto:jujones@aspiranet.org)

### Kings County REACH Adoption Support Group

This group is designed for adults thinking about adoption, parents awaiting adoptive placement and parents of adopted children. Training hours and childcare provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.**

<b>Where</b>	<b>When:</b>
South Valley Community Church 1050 W. Bush Street Lemoore, CA 93245	2nd Tuesday of the month 6:00 – 8:00 PM April 9th May 14th June 11th

**Contact:** Hortencia Casarez at (559) 741-7358 ext. 4513  
or [hcasarez@aspiranet.org](mailto:hcasarez@aspiranet.org)

### College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Program

The College of Sequoias Foster and Kinship Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge in Visalia and Hanford. For a complete list of classes, Google the key words **COS Visalia Kinship**. Register for classes with Miriam Sallam at (559) 737-4842 or email [miriams@cos.edu](mailto:miriams@cos.edu). Classes are available in English and in Spanish.

### Attachment (3 hours)

Wednesday, May 29th  
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
COS Hanford Campus, Room TBA



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151 Canal Drive  
Turlock, CA 95380

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1840 South Central  
Visalia, CA 93277  
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**REACH and Tulare County Adoption Support Services**

**Resource:** We provide 1) telephone support and referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption related community trainings 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletter which includes book reviews and relevant adoption related information.

**Education:** Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the constellation.

**Advocacy:** We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

**Crisis Intervention/Case Management:** Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed. Spanish translation services are provided.

**Hope:** We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage and Hope (RICH) to guide our work with adoptive families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.